



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

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January 18, 2007

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COUNTY SEEKS AID FOR LOCAL FARMERS HURT BY FREEZE *County Asks to be on List of Counties Included in Governor's State of Emergency*

Persistent record low temperatures in San Diego County have severely damaged local agricultural crops. The County Agricultural Commissioner, Robert Atkins has requested that San Diego County be added to the list of counties included in the Governor's recent State of Emergency proclamation, thereby paving the way for local farmers to be eligible to receive loans from the federal government.

"Freezing temperatures began in San Diego County on Jan. 12 and are expected to continue," says Robert Atkins. "While the extent of the damage may not be known for several weeks, we want to begin the process that will help ease the economic burden to our local farmers."

Local agricultural officials are working with industry executives, the California Department of Food and Agriculture and the State Office of Emergency Services to assess the economic loss to the county. Even though freeze damage often takes time to determine, significant damage has already been observed in the avocado, citrus, cut flowers and nursery industries. Preliminary reports indicate the crops hit the hardest are avocados and cut flowers, with both suffering possible losses up to 35 percent. San Diego County produces 63 percent of all avocados and 53 percent of cut flowers grown in the state.

While 2007 crop losses will be determined in the coming weeks, damage to trees and buds which will affect next year's crop, may not be known for much longer. Farming is the county's fifth largest industry with over 5,000 farmers raising crops valued at an estimated \$1.5 billion.

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